



The role of collaborative inquiry in developing engaged faculty

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Summary

Best practices for campus-community partnerships have been defined, but a lack of clarity surrounding how we implement these practices remains. For faculty developers and community engagement leaders seeking to support existing partnerships and increase faculty members' capacity to utilize best practices, a key challenge is determining the unique needs that each partnership has in order to provide the support necessary for its effectiveness (Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq, & Morrison, 2010; Sandy & Holland, 2006).

The question then arises of how do we meet each participant where they are in terms of their knowledge of community engagement practices while simultaneously increasing their collective capacity to engage in campus-community partnerships? Further, how can we simultaneously build participants' capacity to engage in partnerships and attempt to develop a professional development model that will support the long-term sustainability of the community engagement program? Collaborative inquiry as a model of professional development is a promising method of implementing best practices and increasing organizational capacity to engage community partners.

I am currently engaged in an action research (AR) study that is designed to increase the capacity of a public, two-year college to engage in effective campus-community partnerships. To meet this objective, the study explores how college employees engage with their community partner representatives with the intent of identifying areas of improvement in the partnership. I am also preparing to conduct focus groups with the community partners represented in this research. Insights from these focus groups will be presented during a series of topic-focused, “community partner voices” meetings with the collaborative inquiry group during which community partners will be invited to participate.

Through AR methodology, I intend to facilitate the emergence of solutions specific to the organization with which I am conducting my research, while also translating our learning to implications for other practitioners in the field.

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